

up with their artillery and wagons that there was no possibility of passing it. Then drawing his sword, and turning to the officers who were near him, he said, "Here we must fall with honor!" At the head of a small party of cuirassiers and Polish officers he rushed on the columns of the Allies. In this action he received a ball in his left arm: he had already been wounded on the 14th and 16th. He nevertheless advanced, but he found the suburb filled with Allied troops.¹ He fought his way through them and received

ⁱ The Allies were so numerous that they scarcely perceived the losses they sustained. Their masses pressed down upon us in every direction, and it was impossible that victory could fail to be with them. Their success, however, would have been less decisive had it not been for the defection of the Saxons. In the midst of the battle, these troops having moved towards the enemy, as if intending to make an attack, turned suddenly round, and opened a heavy fire of artillery and musketry on the columns by the side of which they had a few moments before been fighting. I do not know in what page of history such a transaction is recorded. This event immediately produced a great difference in our affairs, which were before in a bad enough train. I ought here to mention that before the battle the Emperor dismissed a Bavarian division which still remained with him. He spoke to the officers in terms which will not soon be effaced from their memory. He told them, that, "according to the laws of war, they were his prisoners, since their Government had taken part against him; but that he could not forget the services they had rendered him, and that they were therefore at liberty to return home." These troops left the army, where they were much esteemed, and marched for Bavaria.

The desertion of the Saxons to the enemy obliged the Emperor to order movements to which he would not otherwise have resorted, especially in so warm an action. These unexpected movements caused disorder, when that calmness and that cool determination by which so much may be done at the decisive moment of a battle were most wanting. It was now necessary to think of a retreat, which had, indeed, already begun, in consequence of the physical and moral exhaustion of the troops, which had maintained the contest since the morning under marked disadvantages.

After nearly the whole of the left and part of the centre had passed the Elster the Emperor himself crossed. He desired the artillery officer who had charge of the bridge, for the destruction of which preparation had been made, not to leave the spot, and not to put the match to the train until all the troops had passed over.

At first the corps proceeded along the bridge without any disagreeable accident, but such was the disorder that no one could tell whether or not his column was the last which had to pass. The enemy's sharpshooters were in advance; the pressure towards the bridge was great, and the confusion became extreme.

The officer left in charge of the bridge, not knowing what was the state of things on the enemy's side, ran towards a general officer to learn, if possible, from him how far the passage had been effected; but he was carried away by the crowd, and could not return. The artillerymen who were under his command, seeing German troops and Cossacks pushing forward, blew up the bridge without waiting for orders; and thus the right of the army, which kept the enemy's masses in check, was cut off.

The report of this unfortunate event soon spread through the ranks. The right was to its turn thrown into disorder, and an escape was sought through fields and marshes. This completed the disaster: the troops were made